

INFLATABLE SHAMPOO BASIN

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No.
5 60/400,206, filed July 31, 2002, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by
reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a wash basin, and more particularly to
portable wash basins which can be pneumatically inflated for use in facilities, such as
10 hospitals, nursing homes, and the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

It is often difficult, if not impossible, for individuals confined to a bed to utilize
conventional bathtubs and/or sinks to bathe or wash themselves. These individuals may
be bed-ridden for various reasons, such as surgery, age, or disease. Many of these
15 individuals are non-ambulatory and cannot be moved. Being confined to a bed also
affects the patient when a patient desires simply for their hair to be washed without a
complete bath. Typically, a patient has only two choices available for washing their hair.
The first is to move the patient to a stationary sink over which the patient may lean to
have their hair washed. However, this may be difficult due to the patient's physical
20 condition or the physical demands made on the assistant. The other choice is to move the
patient over to, and place them into, a conventional bathtub. However, attempting to
wash a patient's hair in a conventional bathtub is both uncomfortable to the patient and
ineffective due to the body position of the patient when disposed in a conventional
bathtub. Additionally, the use of a bathtub poses serious safety concerns to the patient
25 and unnecessary physical demands on the assistant.

Therefore, it is often the practice of hospitals, convalescent homes and nursing homes to rely on portable, inflatable wash basins, which have been suggested in the prior art. One such inflatable wash basin of the prior art is illustrated in U.S. Patent No. D293,364 and includes a rectangular tubular wall section, which is inflatable to form the periphery of the basin. A heat sealable floor panel is connected to the lower periphery of the tubular wall section to define the water-tight basin. The tubular wall section includes an opening for accessing the interior cavity of the basin. The basin may be filled with water from a suitable water source, forming a reservoir for washing the patient's hair.

While the aforementioned prior art wash basin works well in its present application, the prior art wash basin suffers from several deficiencies. One such deficiency is the lack of head support for the patient during the washing process. In order to use the prior art wash basin, the patient either has to hold their head up, if at all possible, causing discomfort and strain to the patient, or the assistant must lift and hold the patient's head with one hand while attempting to shampoo the patient's hair with the other hand. Another such deficiency is the lack of a shut-off valve in the drain outlet so that the assistant may either stop or release the water from the basin conveniently, depending on the situation, without leaving the patient unattended. The prior art wash basin requires a clamp that surrounds the drain hose. The clamp is squeezed tightly in order to stop the flow of water, which is awkward to use and requires significant strength. Additionally, the clamp is susceptible to breaking if "over-clamped," making the wash basin unusable. Finally, the wash basin is susceptible to tearing when the neck opening is forced open to accommodate the head region of the patient. In one construction method of the prior art basin, the ends of the neck opening between the upper and lower tubular members is constructed with a straight-line heat seal, thereby acting like a zipper capable of tearing a hole in the wash basin when the neck opening is forced open.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a highly convenient pneumatically inflatable wash basin that addresses the deficiencies of the prior art. The wash basin is formed from a plurality of inflatable tubular members connected to a bottom wall, thereby forming a water-tight basin for washing a patient. Inlets and/or outlets are connected within the wash basin for inflating the tubular members and draining the wash basin of water after

the washing process is complete, respectively. A head support is further provided to support the patient's head during the washing process, and a drain valve is included so that the assistant may either stop or release the water from the basin, depending on the situation, without leaving the patient unattended.

5 In accordance with an aspect of the present invention, a portable wash basin is provided. The portable wash basin includes a bottom wall constructed from an impermeable material. A plurality of inflatable side walls constructed from an impermeable material are connected to and extend upwardly from the bottom wall defining an interior cavity. An opening is disposed in one of the plurality of side walls
10 for accessing the interior cavity from a position exterior of the side walls. The wash basin includes a resealable air valve disposed in pneumatic communication with the plurality of inflatable side walls. The resealable air valve may be connected to a source of air to inflate the side walls, and operable to deflate the side walls. The inflatable wash basin further includes a drain outlet in fluid communication with the interior cavity of the
15 basin, and a resealable valve operable to allow fluid to drain through the drain outlet, and further operable to prohibit fluid from draining through the drain outlet.

 In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a portable wash basin is provided. The portable wash basin includes a bottom wall constructed from an impermeable material. A plurality of inflatable side walls constructed from an
20 impermeable material are connected to and extend upwardly from the bottom wall defining an interior cavity. An opening is disposed in one of the plurality of side walls for accessing the interior cavity from a position exterior of the side walls. The wash basin also includes a resealable air valve disposed in pneumatic communication with the plurality of inflatable side walls. The resealable air valve may be connected to a source
25 of air to inflate the side walls, and operable to deflate the side walls. A head support structure is further provided with the wash basin and is secured to the bottom wall for supported the head of the patient.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

 The foregoing aspects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention will
30 become more readily appreciated as the same become better understood by reference to the following detailed description, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of an inflatable wash basin constructed in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a top view of the inflatable wash basin shown in FIGURE 1;

FIGURE 3 is an elevational view of the inflatable wash basin shown in FIGURE 1
5 taken from the opening side of the basin;

FIGURE 4 is a partial cross section view taken along lines 4-4 in FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 5 is a cross section view taken along lines 5-5 in FIGURE 3;

FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of an inflatable wash basin of the present invention;

10 FIGURE 7 is a top view of the inflatable wash basin of FIGURE 6;

FIGURE 8 is a bottom view of the inflatable wash basin of FIGURE 6;

FIGURE 9 is a front view of the inflatable wash basin of FIGURE 6;

FIGURE 10 is a rear view of the inflatable wash basin of FIGURE 6

FIGURE 11 is a side view of the inflatable wash basin of FIGURE 6, and

15 FIGURE 12 is a side view of the inflatable wash basin taken from the side opposite of FIGURE 11.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings where like numerals correspond to like elements. The present invention is an
20 inflatable wash basin suitable for use with a patient confined to a bed in a hospital, nursing home, or the like so that the patient may wash their hair. One suitable embodiment of an inflatable basin, generally designated 10, constructed in accordance with the present invention is illustrated in FIGURES 1-12. Generally described, the inflatable basin 10 comprises a bottom wall 12 and upwardly extending side walls 14,
25 which extend around the perimeter of the bottom wall 12. The side walls 14, in cooperation with the bottom wall 12, define a water-tight cavity suitably dimensioned for receiving the head of a patient. The side walls 14 include an opening 16 so that the head of the patient may be placed within the basin 10 when the patient is lying in a prone position. The basin 10 can be filled with water so that the patient may effectively wash
30 their hair with the aid of an assistant.

As shown in FIGURES 1 and 2, the inflatable basin 10 may be formed from a plurality of vertically stacked and interconnected inflatable tubular members 14A and

14B, connected to the bottom wall 12. The inflatable tubular members 14A and 14B are preferably circular in cross-section, having substantially the same cross-section dimension. The lowermost tubular member 14A is connected to the bottom wall 12 at the bottom wall's peripheral edge, the tubular members forming the peripheral side walls 14
5 of the basin 10. The bottom wall 12 has a rectangular shape and is constructed of an impermeable material, such as polyethylene or plasticized polyvinyl chloride (PVC) film. The bottom wall 12 is formed of a planer sheet having the strength and stability necessary to support the weight of the basin when filled with water. The bottom wall 12 is glued, heat sealed, or otherwise connected at its outer peripheral edges to the bottom surface of
10 the tubular member 14A, as illustrated in FIGURE 4.

While described above and illustrated herein has a sheet of material, it will be readily apparent that the bottom wall 12 may be constructed as an inflatable member or constructed with a padded floor surface comprising a layer of foam-rubber or the like covered by a water-tight covering. Alternatively, the padded floor can be constructed by
15 an inflatable layer that overlays the bottom wall. In this particular embodiment, the inflatable layer could include a dedicated air valve for inflating and deflating, or could be constructed in communication with the inflatable tubular members 14A and inflated via an air valve 20A, as will be described in detail below.

Referring back to FIGURE 1, the tubular members 14A and 14B are stacked one
20 on top of the other, with tubular member 14B being the upper tubular member, remote from said bottom wall 12. The tubular members 14A and 14B are formed of an impermeable material, such as polyethylene or plasticized polyvinyl chloride (PVC) film, and can be easily fabricated and joined by adhesive or conventional heat sealing techniques known in the art. In one embodiment shown in FIGURE 5, the tubular
25 member 14A (hidden by tubular member 14B) and tubular member 14B are connected by a heat seal 40 having uniquely shaped ends 44, as will be described in more detail below. The tubular members 14A and 14B include resealable air valves 20A and 20B disposed in fluid communication with the interior of the tubular members 14A and 14B, respectively. Alternatively, the tubular members 14A and 14B may be interconnected in such a way as
30 to permit inflation of both members 14A and 14B via one of the resealable air valves 20A or 20B.

As best shown in FIGURE 2, the tubular member 14B is generally C-shaped when inflated, the ends 22 and 24 of which define the opening 16 for accessing the interior cavity of the basin 10. The opening 16 is positioned at one of the sides of the rectangular shaped basin 10 and is suitably dimensioned for receiving the neck region of the patient when the patient is lying in a prone position. As best shown in FIGURE 1, the lower tubular member 14A supports the neck of the patient when the patient's head is within the interior cavity of the basin 10.

In one aspect of the present invention, the connection between the tubular members 14A and 14B is reinforced at a location where the ends 22 and 24 of the tubular member 14B connect to the tubular member 14A. This improves the ability of the basin to prevent tearing when the neck opening is forced opened. In one embodiment, the tubular members 14A and 14B are connected by a heat seal 40 forming a connection interface that terminates in bull nose or teardrop shaped heat seal ends 44 at the location where the ends 22 and 24 of tubular member 14B connect to the tubular member 14A, as best shown in FIGURE 5. Specifically, as the heat seal 40 approaches the ends 22 and 24, the heat seal is formed with a bulbous region at end sections 44. The bulbous or teardrop shaped end sections 44, as opposed to the linear heat seal ends of the conventionally constructed prior art basin shown in U.S. Patent No. D293,364, creates a larger surface area at the ends of the heat seal formed between the tubular members 14A and 14B. As such, the larger surface area of the tear drop shaped end sections 44 aids in the prevention of tearing or separating the tubular members 14A and 14B at the location where the ends 22 and 24 of the tubular member 14B connects to the tubular member 14A when the opening 16 is forced opened. It will be appreciated that the same approach may also be used if the tubular members 14A and 14B are connected using adhesive bonding techniques.

Referring now to FIGURES 2 and 3, a drain outlet 28 maybe provided in the bottom wall 12 in fluid communication with the interior of the basin to permit fluid to conveniently drain from the basin 10. The drain outlet 28 may be connected to a drain hose (not shown) external from the basin 10 to permit remote disposal of the used water. Any of a variety of connection techniques may be employed to connect the drain hose to the drain outlet 28. The drain outlet 28 may include a resealable valve 30 to selectively seal the outlet 28 so that the water may be maintained within the basin during use, and

drained thereafter. Alternatively, if a drain hose is utilized in conjunction with the drain outlet 28, the drain hose may include an on-off valve well known in the art (such as a petcock type valve or a spring loaded plunger type valve) so that water may be maintained within the basin during use, and drained after the bathing process is complete.

5 Referring back to FIGURE 1 and 2, the basin 10 may further include an inflatable head support structure or pillow 32, to receive and support the head of the patient when the patient's head is disposed within the cavity of the basin 10. The pillow 32 is secured to the bottom wall 12 and positioned proximal to the opening 16 in the tubular member 14B. The pillow 32 has a dedicated resealable air valve 34 to inflate and deflate
10 the pillow. However, depending on the size and location of the pillow 32, the pillow may be in fluid communication with tubular member 14A and inflatable via air valve 20A.

Using the inflatable basin 10 constructed in accordance with aspects of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGURES 1-4. When the basin 10 is not in use, the basin 12 can be stored in a deflated condition. When a patient confined to
15 a bed wishes to wash his/her hair, the basin 10 is transported to the patient's bed. The patient is permitted to remain on the bed as the basin 10 is unfolded. Tubular members 14A and 14B are then inflated via the air valves 20A and 20B. This can be readily accomplished by manually exhaling into the valve or by using an auxiliary air system, such as an air pump or with the exhaust port of a wet/dry vacuum. The inflation
20 of the tubular members 14A and 14B will cause tubular members 14A and 14B to expand, thereby erecting the side walls 14. The head and upper torso of the patient may then be moved upward to a position such that the basin may be positioned under the patient's head.

Once the basin is in position, the head of the patient is lowered within the cavity
25 of the basin 10 such that the patient's neck is disposed within the opening 16 of the tubular member 14B and supported by the tubular member 14A. If the pillow 32 is inflated, the patient's head is also positioned to be supported by the pillow 32. The basin 10 can be filled with water from a suitable water source prior to or after the patient's head is lowered within the cavity of the basin 10. Prior to filling the basin 10 with water,
30 the valve 30 positioned in the outlet 28 is disposed in a closed or sealed position.

After the patient's hair is washed, the valve 30 is opened and the used water drains from the basin 10 via the drain hose due to the effect of gravity. If the drain rate of the

basin is too slow, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that an optional water pump can be connected to the drain hose in any conventional manner to aid in the drainage of basin 10. When the water is entirely drained from the basin and the patient's head is removed from the basin 10, the basin 10 may be deflated by opening the air
5 valves 20A and 20B, permitting air within the tubular members 14A and 14B to be released. Prior to or after deflating the basin 10, the basin 10 may be towel dried or may be dried via a wet/dry vacuum. Alternatively, the basin 10 may be hung up in a vertical orientation via hooks (not shown) to permit efficient air drying. After the basin 10 is deflated and dried, the basin 10 may then be folded into a relatively compact unit for
10 convenient storage during periods of non use. Prior to storing the basin 10, the basin 10 may be cleansed and sanitized as desired.

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, while the illustrative
15 basin 10 included two stackable tubular members, it will be readily evident that any number of tubular members of suitable size may be used to form the side walls of basin 10.